

Meeting Notes
NORTH DELTA IMPROVEMENTS GROUP
Wednesday, September 17, 2003
9:30-11:30 at Jones & Stokes (2600 V Street)

ATTENDANCE LIST:

Lori Clamurro	Delta Protection Commission
Robert Clark	North Delta Water Agency & CCVFCA
Gilbert Cosio	MBK Engineers
Suzanne DeLeon	California Department of Fish and Game
Joel Dudas	California Department of Water Resources
Bill Dutton	US Bureau of Reclamation
Chris Elliott	Jones & Stokes
Walter Hoppe	Point Pleasant
Gwen Knittweis	California Department of Water Resources North Delta
Gil Labrie	DCC Engineering
Roger Lee	California Department of Water Resources & Reclamation Board
Monica Martin	California Department of Water Resources North Delta
Sara Martin	Jones & Stokes
Jeff Mount	UC Davis
Curt Schmutte	California Department of Water Resources North Delta
Sam Sharideh	San Joaquin County
Jeff Stuart	NOAA Fisheries
Don Trieu	MBK Engineers
Topper Van Loben Sels	Delta Protection Commission & North Delta Water Agency
Keith Whitener	The Nature Conservancy
Daniel Wilson	Delta Protection Commission

HANDOUTS

- Meeting Agenda
- Draft Alternatives Screening Matrix

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME – Gwen Knittweis, DWR

Gwen Knittweis opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and facilitating introductions. Gwen also introduced Chris Elliott, a Jones & Stokes project manager who is now managing the North Delta Flood Control and Ecosystem Restoration Project in place of Aimee Dour-Smith. Aimee left Jones & Stokes in July to raise her family. Chris has been at Jones & Stokes for 10 years and has managed numerous restoration and flood control projects on the Lower American River. He is also a Delta resident. Chris told the meeting attendees not to hesitate to call him with any questions.

2. PROJECT STATUS AND SCHEDULE – Gwen Knittweis and Curt Schmutte, DWR

Curt Schmutte informed the group that the North Delta Flood Control and Ecosystem Restoration Project is funded out of the General Fund and, although the project is continuing, because of the state budget crisis there have been significant cuts made to project funding. He urged landowners and other stakeholders to use the public forums available to them to express their support of the North Delta project. He explained that even these small gestures can ultimately have an effect on funding. Curt also asked the members of the NDIG to call either him or Gwen with any project comments, input, or suggestions as DWR is striving to make this the best possible project.

Curt then went on to explain that the North Delta project team is planning on moving ahead with an environmental impact report only in 2004, as DWR does have the authority to implement this project without a federal lead agency through the Subventions and Special Projects Programs. The decision to proceed without a federal lead stemmed from the Corps' request that the project scheduled be extended for several years. Simply put, DWR does not have the time, budget, or staff to absorb these delays. Gwen expressed the hope that a well-received EIR and strong support from locals should make for an attractive target for additional funding.

Gwen also informed the group that the sediment studies are currently underway and should be coming together later this fall to add to the project's strong science underpinning. The current project schedule is as follows:

Spring 2004	Draft Environmental Impact Report
December 2004	Final Environmental Impact Report
Spring 2005	Project Design Complete
Spring 2008	Construction Complete

3. ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION TECHNICAL COORDINATION – Gwen Knittweis, DWR

Gwen gave the group a status report on the ecosystem restoration alternatives development accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation, and acknowledged that Collette Zemitis has done a tremendous amount of work coordinating the team on the ecosystem restoration front. Ecosystem Restoration coordination meetings were held in May, and fostered a very open, creative brainstorming environment. The ideas for ecosystem restoration on McCormack-Williamson Tract that came out of those brainstorm sessions will be reviewed by a team of expert community representatives for scientific adequacy. Following is a summary of those ideas.

- **Dendritic channels** – construction of these shallow, meandering channels will promote natives and discourage exotics.
- **Nekton gates** – these allow muting of tidal action, and have been used with good results on the east coast. They would be great for use in the subtidal areas that have experienced subsidence, as the gates would allow these areas to be made into tidal marsh and wetlands. This would be combined with a cross-island levee to block the water from entering deeper areas of the island; preventing open water and the exotics that prefer open water.
- **Tule clumps** – Tule clumps could be pre-vegetated on portions of the island, and then opened up to tidal action. The pre-existence of the native tules would prevent exotics from taking hold.
- **Encouragement of sediment deposition** – in those highly subsided areas.
- **Channel widening** – may create habitat benches or augment flows as cooler, faster waters favor natives (as opposed to the more sluggish and warm waters that favor exotics).
- **Microtidal** – historical shallow water and tidally-influenced marsh and other complex habitat could be created by incrementally transitioning elevations.

These ideas have been presented to the Calfed Science Panel, and a panel of academic experts has been assembled specifically to review the North Delta alternatives. The first of what could be up to three meetings of this panel will occur in October.

4. ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT – Gwen Knittweis, DWR and Chris Elliott, Jones & Stokes

Gwen and Chris described the status of flood control alternatives development for the project. One of the objectives is to create a flood stage reduction sufficient enough to benefit I-5. The project team is working with CalTrans and the Federal Highway Administration to characterize the costs of historical I-5 flooding and what stage goal would help to protect the highway.

Gwen then asked the group for input on another objective: should the project focus on “maximizing” flood control benefits (as well as ecosystem restoration benefits), or should a numeric goal be set for stage reduction? Daniel Wilson and other stakeholders responded that numeric goals need to be set for flood stage reduction in order to ensure that any benefit is actually achieved.

Daniel Wilson also explained that for him and other locals, the main priority is to stop the surge of floodwaters that occurs when McCormack-Williamson’s levees blow out; degrading the east and south levees on McCormack-Williamson to 10 or 12 feet will create substantial benefits to downstream areas. He also outlined other priorities that he felt would achieve maximum benefits: levee off the top 1,000 acres of Staten Island and build a causeway, fix the local bridges, and create a detention area on Staten for use in huge flood events. Dredging of the ½ mile north of and the mile south of the New Hope Bridge could be done first in a phased approach to create some immediate alleviation of the problem.

Chris handed out the draft alternatives screening matrix, which was developed from the three-tiered screening criteria developed in earlier NDIG meetings. The matrix includes objectives and criteria so that each alternative can be compared. If an alternative garners a “no” to one of the questions on the matrix, it will be considered for elimination. After taking a look at the matrix, Gil Labrie mentioned that it doesn’t look like any of the alternatives that have been presented could make it through the screen without at least one “no”. He suggested alternatives be ranked with a relativity screen, in lieu of “yes” and “no,” so that the project team could see which one would give maximum benefit. Daniel Wilson also suggested finalizing some of the stage numbers for flood goals shown in draft in the matrix.

6. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, November 19, 2003 at Jones & Stokes.

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item	Responsibility
1. Create a gradation that allows for relative ranking of alternatives in the screening matrix using a numeric scoring system.	Jones & Stokes
2. Use public forums for political support of the North Delta project.	All
3. Call or e-mail project staff with any comments, concerns, or ideas.	All